

ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

In scalable multi-node systems, applications that interact with remote users often use sessions that involve multiple messages. Unless the application instance that initiates the conversation processes all subsequent parts of that session, the context of the conversation must be passed between application instances. This context often involves sensitive data, such as session keys. This invention uses a central service, known as a Key Repository process, to create and manage a set of symmetric encryption keys unique to this application. All authorized instances of the application then obtain these keys from the Key Repository process, enabling these application instances to encrypt and save the context on disk, and allowing a possibly different instance of the application to retrieve and decrypt the context. As a result, these application programs can be designed to operate in a context-free manner.